

SAVONAROLA AND HIS TIMES.

VOLUME I.

LONDON

PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.

NEW-STREET SQUARE

THE HISTORY
OF
GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA

AND OF HIS TIMES.

BY PASQUALE VILLARI,

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TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN

BY

LEONARD HORNER, F.R.S.

WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE AUTHOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, ROBERTS, & GREEN.

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TO THE MARCHESE GINO CAPPONI,

A NAME ILLUSTRIOUS FOR CENTURIES IN THE ANNALS
OF FLORENCE, AND NOBLY UPHELD BY HIM IN THE
PRESENT DAY,

THIS TRANSLATION OF A WORK HE HIGHLY VALUES, INTO A
LANGUAGE WITH WHICH HE IS FAMILIAR, IS INSCRIBED, WITH
THE GREATEST RESPECT AND WARMEST REGARD, BY

THE TRANSLATOR.

THE TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

SOON after the commencement of a late residence in Florence, being on the battle-field where the heroic Savonarola so valiantly fought, and was so cruelly slain, I was desirous to read his history in his contemporary biographies. I mentioned to my venerable and learned friend, the Marchese Gino Capponi, that I was reading the Life of the Friar by Burlamacchi; upon which he observed — ‘You must read Villari, a recent work, by an able man, the result of ten years’ research into original documents, many of which he discovered; it is the first and the only work in which full justice has been done to Savonarola.’

I procured the volumes, and was so much interested by them; particularly by the new light thrown upon the character of the Friar as a philosopher and politician, that I considered it desirable that an edition of the work should be prepared for my countrymen who do not read Italian. I had soon the pleasure of becoming acquainted with the author, to whom I mentioned what had occurred to me, and I learned from him that the ground was not pre-occupied. Finding that he spoke English with fluency, I requested his cooperation in my proposed undertaking; that he would revise my translation, so that I might feel secure that I had always rightly

understood his meaning, especially in idiomatic expressions. He, kindly, complying with my request, I set to work, and I was soon rewarded by an increasing intimacy with the accomplished author.

The translation has been printed since my return to England; each proof sheet has been sent to the author, and returned with his approval or suggested amendments.

I have considered it advisable to retain, in most cases, the Italian Christian names of persons, and designations of public institutions, but have added an explanatory index of the latter. With the approbation of the author, I have given a selection only of the numerous documents appended to his second volume, such as will be interesting to the general reader. The documents, so liberally supplied by the author, are given as verifications of his statements in the text; and persons who are disposed to criticize the work by an examination of these documents, will naturally prefer to consult them in the original language. I have added a few illustrations from other sources.

L. H.

60 MONTAGU SQUARE:
January 1863.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE fame of Father Girolamo Savonarola, which, during his lifetime, excited general wonder, and to which the attention of our greatest writers was long directed, became, in the eighteenth century, if not utterly forgotten, a subject only of derision. It was the common fate of religious men in that age, and of every religious subject. When Bayle, in his Dictionary, with a cold and cynical spirit, directed his sharp and bitter sarcasms against the poor Monk, calling him a low ridiculous impostor, who had well deserved the martyrdom he underwent, his opinion was almost universally adopted.

Not long after, an anonymous writer published, at Geneva, a biography of Savonarola, in Italian.* He professed, in substance, the same opinions as those of Bayle, but what the latter had uttered only in scorn, proceeded in this author from anger and spite: the venomous sarcasms which dropped from the pen of the cold sceptic Bayle, were aimed by the anonymous writer with a fury and a zeal that betrayed a brother monk: he was, in fact, the Jesuit Rastrelli. But the rancour was so

* Vita del Padre Girolamo Savonarola, Ginevra, 1781.

evident that it destroyed all confidence in the book, notwithstanding a certain amount of merit, from useful researches, and from being written with a free, though unchastened, vivacity, not uncommon in our writers of the last century.

A year after this work, a new "History of Savonarola" * was published at Leghorn, also without the name of the author. It was written by Barsanti, a Dominican Friar, who, replying to the anonymous Jesuit, took up the defence of his brother monk with great warmth. Barsanti appears to have been, in that age, the only person who read and admired the sermons of Savonarola: he had studied the old biographies, as well as a valuable manuscript, lost sight of after his time, the *Diaries* (*Giornate*) of Lorenzo Violi. He had been a diligent, minute, and patient collector of all notices relating to his subject, which, if it did not excite any sympathy among his contemporaries, was at least a solace to his own heart. He did not allow himself to be carried away by the current of the day, and produced a book which might have been written centuries before, but which did little more than swell the number of the older biographies. The spirit of the old chroniclers seemed to be revived in him, but without the simplicity and ingenuous vigour of their style: we find in his work the same warmth of feeling, the same mistakes, and the same fanaticism, but we miss that genuine originality, which, in them, reflects so vividly

* *Della Storia del P. Girolamo Savonarola*, libri quattro, dedicati a S. A. Pietro Leopoldo. Livorno, 1782.